The Weight Loss Solution for People Who Hate to Cook

In previous lessons, you learned that one strategy that helps in reducing the calories you consume is to eat at home more often. So, what if you want to lose weight but you can't stand the idea of cooking?

If this describes you, you're not alone. Since 1950, the average American is eating almost twice as many meals at restaurants. The good news is that you can stick to a healthy diet without excess, tedious, and time-consuming chores in the kitchen or at the grocery store. Consider the strategies in this lesson.

Steps to Take at Home

1. **Tidy up your kitchen.** Maybe you're avoiding your kitchen because you're afraid to find out what's living in your refrigerator. **A sparkling sink and stove top could make you want to hang around.**

2. **Stock up on ingredients.** Cooking is frustrating if you frequently find out that you lack the stuff you need. Keep versatile basics on hand like flour, corn starch, mustard, and balsamic vinegar. You may be surprised to learn that frozen vegetables are just as nutritious as the fresh variety.

3. **Buy equipment.** Gadgets make life easier. Try out a bread machine or a rice cooker. Find out why people love their microplanes.

4. **Learn new recipes.** Browse online for fast recipes. Borrow a book from the library. Ask your friends for their favorite easy dishes.

5. **Assemble instant meals. Some balanced meals require no cooking at all.** Toss nuts and seeds into a salad. Add whole grain cereal and fruit to yogurt. Search the internet for no-cook recipes and learn to put together some tasty meals without cooking.

6. **Rely on produce.** Most fruits and vegetables can be served with little preparation. Steaming takes only a few minutes. A drizzle of olive oil tastes great and provides a dose of healthy fat.

7. **Share cooking duty.** If your spouse likes to cook, you can double up on laundry and yard work in exchange. **Invite your neighbors for a weekly potluck and split the leftovers.**

Steps to Take When You Go Out

1. **Change your shopping.** Maybe you have bad memories of being stuck in a long line on Sunday afternoon at the supermarket. **Try shopping in the early hours before work or visiting a farmers market on weekends.**

2. **Make a list.** Writing out a list simplifies grocery shopping. You'll quickly grab everything you need and avoid making repeat visits for forgotten items.

3. **Stick to outside aisles. In most supermarkets, the essentials are laid out around the perimeter.** You'll avoid getting distracted by 80 different brands of tortilla chips and sports drinks.

4. **Select the right restaurants.** Your only vegetable options at a steak house may be creamed spinach or corn. Head to an Indian buffet instead where you'll have more selections that you can choose from.

5. **Study the menu.** Master common terms. Grilled foods are usually lower in calories than fried foods. When you're ordering pasta, look for tomato sauces rather than cream sauces. Skip the salad if it's loaded with processed meat and mayonnaise.

6. **Brown bag it.** Develop a repertoire of easy treats you can package for lunch. Cut vegetables and yogurt or a whole wheat pita stuffed with hummus make it easier to resist the vending machine or the fried chicken special at the diner next door.

7. **Carry snacks.** Bring along your own food for the hours in between meals. A handful of almonds or raisins satisfy your hunger without a lot of extra calories.

Healthy, low-calorie eating can be quick and simple. You may never watch the Food Channel or shop at Williams Sonoma, but you'll still enjoy a nutritious diet.

In the next lesson, you'll discover how to work with your body's natural processes to control hunger.

Here's what you need to do today:

Call a friend and ask them for a recipe for one of their favorite, low-calorie, easy dishes. Get the ingredients ahead of time and plan to make it one day next week. Try it! You might find that you like it as much as your friend!